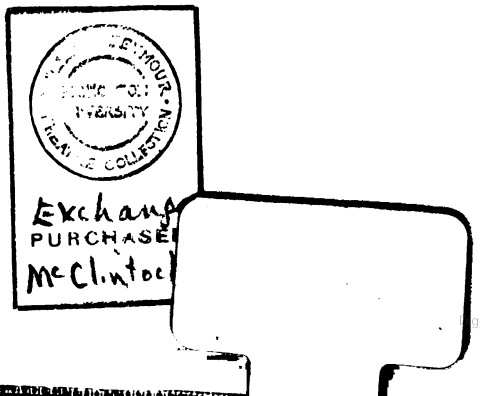
...rskin Biographies

JULIA MARLOWE

BY

JOHN D. BARRY

Richard G. Badger & Company, Publishers
BOSTON



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I.

IN the early seventies a party of English colonists, most of them farmers, came from the north of England to America, and settled on the farm lands in Kansas. The colony failed, and some of its members went to Kansas City. Among them were John Frost and his wife and three children, the eldest of whom, Sarah Frances, born in the village of Caldbeck, in Cumberlandshire, and then about five years of age, is now known to playgoers as Julia Marlowe. In Kansas City, Frances Frost, as she was then called, had her first schooling, continued later in Cincinnati, where the family moved. In Cincinnati, at the age of twelve, she made her first appearance on the stage as a mem-

ber of the chorus in a "Pinafore" company, recruited very largely from the pupils of the public schools in Cincinnati by Colonel R. E. J. Miles, a theatrical manager of repute, and directed by his sister-in-law, Miss Ada Dow, a stock actress of considerable experience. Later she played Sir Joseph Porter under the name of Fanny Brough, her mother's family name; Suzanne, in "The Chimes of Normandy"; and a page in "The Little Duke." She had a pretty singing-voice; and, though not a quick study, she showed aptitude for stage work. It is worth noting here that none of her family had ever been known to be associated in any way with the theatre.

In the next few years the name of Fanny Brough appeared on the play bills as little Heinrich in "Rip Van Winkle," in support of Robert McWade, and later in the company of Miss Josephine Riley, an actress whom Colonel Miles was starring through the West. Her parts with Miss Riley included Maria in "Twelfth Night," Balthazar in "Romeo and Juliet," Stephen in "The

Parthenia in " Ingomar "

Parthenia in "Ingomar"

Hunchback," and Myrene in "Pygmalion and Galatea." It is said that she played Maria with great vivacity, though she was hardly old enough to understand the lines.

At the age of sixteen, Fanny Brough disappeared from the stage, and, under the direction of Miss Dow, began a course of study in New York, lasting for three years, in preparation for her career as Julia Marlowe. It has been said that Miss Dow is the aunt of Julia Marlowe, but there is no relationship between them. Miss Marlowe has herself explained that Miss Dow was her adopted aunt. Her instruction consisted of the study of plays, chiefly classical pieces, the interpretation of the leading characters, and of lessons in singing, fencing, deportment, and in French. At eight o'clock in the morning she would begin work, studying till noon alone. After luncheon she would put on a long-trained gown, and rehearse with her aunt the character she had been preparing. In her teaching, Miss Dow had the wisdom to allow her pupil to develop her own conceptions. She never explained

how a line should be read or showed by example how a character should be played. She merely stood aside and criticised. In this way Miss Marlowe, instead of imitating her teacher, as many students of acting do, learned to rely on herself, and to work on original lines. The daily lesson lasted during most of the afternoon, and was resumed after dinner. Occasionally the monotony of the tasks was broken by visits to the theatre. During this time Julia Marlowe saw Mary Anderson, Clara Morris, and a few other well-known players. She was particularly impressed by the acting of Miss Clara Morris, from the study of whose deliberate and effective methods she believes that she received valuable suggestions.

At this time there were fewer schools of acting in this country than there are now, and an aspirant to the stage had usually the choice of securing a precarious start in playing small rôles in inferior road-companies, or of preparing for a more ambitious beginning by studying with a retired actor or with one of the many teachers of elocu-

tion. With few exceptions, the teachers of elocution were very poor trainers for acting. Their pupils were taught an absurdly artificial manner of speech and affected tricks which, after a little experience, if they were clever, they soon learned to discard. Some of the actors, however, were able to give helpful instruction. Mary Anderson, for example, sought the aid of the elder Vandenhoff, who for years had been teaching successfully in New York. But most actors have little faith in training for their work: they believe that the only way to learn to act is by acting. The best that the dramatic schools can do is to give their pupils a sound education and practice in playing a variety of parts. In fact, if the first requirement is achieved, the foundation is laid for a career justified by talent. Without talent, no education in the world can make a good actor. Most of our players show their defects, not in lack of temperamental qualities, but in vulgarities of speech, manner, and taste. The theatre in itself is a great school, but it rarely eradicates defects that ought to have been overcome in

early youth. Apparently, Miss Marlowe had no serious defects of manner to overcome, or, if she did, Miss Dow corrected them before her pupil made a public appearance. On her first appearance, Miss Marlowe spoke the purest of all English, which is the English that betrays the accent of no particular locality; and she had the bearing of a well-bred young woman. She says that in the matter of carriage she was her own teacher. One day she happened to catch a glimpse of herself in a large mirror as she was walking. She was startled by the ugly movement of her hips, and she determined to correct the fault at once. At the time she was passing the summer on the Jersey coast; and early every morning she paced the shore with her hands pressing down on her hips, till she had remedied the fault. Even in her beginnings, she never offended against taste. She had not, to be sure, the plasticity which Lawrence Barrett used to insist upon as an essential to good acting; but she was young enough to acquire it. By determining to appear in a repertory, she was likely to

acquire it much more rapidly than the average beginner, who is permitted to play only a half-dozen parts in the same number of years.

II.

AT the beginning of her work, Miss Dow had not thought of attempting to launch Miss Marlowe as a star. But she became convinced that her pupil would in time become strong enough to play emotional and classical parts at the head of a company. So, after three years, she searched for a manager; but no manager would consent to try to establish an unknown player. Finally, in the spring of 1887, Colonel Miles organized a company, and took Miss Marlowe for a brief tour through Connecticut, during which she appeared as Parthenia. He also engaged New York Bijou Theatre, then called the Bijou Opera House, and arranged to present Miss Marlowe there at a special performance on the afternoon of Thursday, Oct. 20, 1887.

The time chosen for introducing the actress was more favorable than Miss Marlowe's friends could have realized. There were then few actresses on our stage who were devoting themselves to legitimate plays,

Parthenia in "Ingomar"

Juliet in "Romeo and Juliet"

and of these most of the more successful came from France and England for visits of a season at a time. Madame Modjeska, it is true, was displaying her beautiful art in a repertory largely classic; and Miss Mary Anderson, her fame magnified by successes in Great Britain, could feel assured of attracting enormous audiences in any American theatre where she might appear. But even at that time Miss Anderson was contemplating the retirement into private life, which took place not long afterward; and Madame Modjeska was no longer young. A few years before, Miss Margaret Mather, an actress with remarkable temperament, whose first appearance had been noisily trumpeted, had bitterly disappointed her first admirers, her art growing more vulgar and coarse with experience. So there was room in the American theatre for an actress with ambition to devote herself to the best in the drama, who could bring to it youth, beauty, grace, and temperament.

It was probably in order to display these qualities to particular advantage that Miss

Dow chose for her pupil's first appearance Maria Lovell's well-known adaptation from the German. "Ingomar" is not a great play, but in its kind it is a good play. Our audiences still love romance, but the romance of action, the romance that Dumas loved and that he passed on to Anthony Hope, not the grandiloquent sentimentalizings of the German novelists and the old-fashioned playwrights. Ten years ago "Ingomar" had possibly a little more vitality than is now left in it, though it has lately been revived by so modern an actress as Miss Julia Arthur. Much of its late popularity was probably due to the success of Mary Anderson in the leading part, which peculiarly suited her rather declamatory style.

The audience that assembled to see Miss Marlowe, it is safe to assume, was composed very largely of cynical playgoers. In New York the *débutante*, before she has proven that she possesses ability, is always an object of amusement or pity, or both. The first appearance of an actress in an important character, however, is an interesting event;

and it generally fills a New York theatre. It would be a mistake to say that those who saw Miss Marlowe's Parthenia believed that she was a great actress. Several experienced judges of acting, however, thought she had the qualifications that made a good actress. A few even declared that she gave the promise of greatness. The venture served the purpose of attracting to her the attention of theatrical managers, of influential actors, and of discerning critics. Before a week had passed, Miss Marlowe received several offers of engagements in travelling companies, among others one from Mr. William Gillette, who at once appreciated her quality, and who believed that she was ideally suited to an important character in a new play which he was then preparing to present on tour.

The significance of Miss Marlowe's first appearance in New York makes the event worth recording at some length. The cast was as follows: —

Ingomar . . . . . Mr. Frank Evans.
Alastor . . . . . Mr. J. Brennan.

Myron	Mr. C. Leslie Allen.
Timarch	Mr. George Nash.
Polydor	Mr. F. J. Currier.
Lykor	Mr. B. Henderson.
Amytar	Mr. J. Daymond.
Elphenor	Mr. C. Williams.
Adrastas	Mr. F. Walton.
Novio	Mr. B. H. Pierce.
Trenobantes	Mr. William Cummings.
Ambivar	Mr. F. Wilson.
Samo	Mr. L. Cotier.
Actea	Miss Effie Wild.
Theano	Miss Isabelle Waldron.
Parthenia	Miss Julia Marlowe.

The notices of the dramatic critics show plainly that Miss Marlowe gave the audience a surprise. Mr. William Winter, unfortunately, was not present: he may have felt that it was not worth his while to go to see a raw young actress disport herself. Other critics of importance, however, were there; and the notice by Mr. Edward A. Dithmar, of the *Times*, a writer of sympathy and discernment, is especially interesting. Here it is, in part:—

"Miss Marlowe is not a spectacular

Parthenia. She did not conquer by a glance or a gesture. She is not statuesque. She is comely and of good figure, but not beautiful. Her eyes are the most attractive feature of her face, which is uncommonly mobile and intelligent. She depicted the simplicity and love of the Greek maiden in a sensible, straightforward manner that convinced the minds and touched the hearts of everybody present who had a mind and a heart. Her work was marked by none of the failings of the novice. Her touch was always sure, and she impressed the critical observer with a sense of the ability to calculate beforehand the actual effect of every look and gesture. This is a faculty that three-fifths of the actors now on the stage do not possess. Her conception of the character was clear and reasonable; her execution of it, womanly and, above all, intelligent. She had no 'great moments.' She made no conspicuous points.

"But her grasp of the character never relaxed, and she preserved the illusion under the most distressing surroundings. The

episode of the song of love was treated daintily and without exaggeration. The defiance of Ingomar was true and affecting, and not stagy. She expressed the anger of the girl very vividly, and without resort to any hackneyed artifice. She was equally successful with every other phase of the rôle. She did not carry her expression of love to the limits of great, absorbing passion; but Parthenia is not a woman of strong passions.

"In depicting the ingenuousness of the girl, she was not too coy. When she wept, the tears seemed to be real; and her smiles seemed to be the reflection of a sunny temperament. Her voice is strong and pleasing; and, if she has a singing voice, it ought to be pure contralto. The tones are never mannish; and, best of all, she speaks the English language very well."

The gentleman who used to write voluminously on the theatre under the pseudonym of "Nym Crinkle" was also pleased with the new actress. "The old, old story of 'Ingomar,'" he wrote in the New York *World*, "was told yesterday afternoon at the Bijou

Viola in "Twelfth Night"

Julia in "The Hunchback"

Theatre. It is a pretty story of the power of affection over brute force, and it was told with new earnestness and new gentleness by a young woman who was unknown to her audience, but who speedily won their attention and their respect for her sure dramatic instinct and her delicate accuracy of method. . . . Miss Julia Marlowe infused the old lines with an intelligent charm, and, after riveting the attention, commanded the approbation by an effective, tender, and legitimately dramatic rendering of the rôle. She is a good-looking girl, of medium height, with an expressive face and perfect command of her powers. She betrayed none of the usual nervousness of amateurs and none of the self-consciousness of cerebral novices. Her understanding of the inner significance of Parthenia's part was clear, and her manifestation of it artistic, sympathetic, and natural. To an intelligent purpose she added a picturesque manner, and so, with simple touches, adorned the old rôle and won her observers delicately and irresistibly."

Less enthusiastic, but altogether encourag-

ing, was the notice that appeared in the New York *Herald*: —

"The impersonation, despite certain faults, due chiefly to lack of much experience, was in many ways charming and on occasion forcible. The actress has a voice that falls pleasantly on the ear, large, limpid eyes, full of expression, and a mobile, sensitive mouth. In stature Miss Marlowe is medium; and she is graceful, and made a pretty picture. The young lady read her lines with full appreciation of their intention, and mirrored in her face, with delightful ingenuousness, the workings of her mind and the emotions which stirred her heart. It was a pretty presentation of fresh young womanhood. The faults of the actress are a lack of repose where it is called for, an excess of gesturing, and too many bright smiles. At times also she did too much by-play in looks and action."

Among the warmest of Miss Marlowe's admirers on this occasion was the late Colonel Ingersoll. His published praises, copied widely in the press, and commented on

throughout the country, did much to start the actress on the road to success.

When an actress begins her career at the top, as the theatrical expression is, she is likely to be subjected to pretty searching criticism. Her severest critics, moreover, usually belong to her own profession. Actors who have served years of apprenticeship resent what they look upon as the presumption of a novice in taking at the start a position which has always been their own goal, to be reached through hard experience. Mary Anderson has described in her autobiography the open ridicule to which she was subjected from the members of the company who played with her on her first public appearance. Miss Marlowe, however, does not appear to have suffered from any such prejudice. Many critics, it is true, denied her authority to appear in leading rôles; but even from these she received some encouragement. On the other hand there were many more critics who offered her the most stimulating praise. It has lately been said that, when Miss Mar-

lowe appeared as a star, she was really not a novice; that her training as a child actress had prepared her for her later career. It is very much to be doubted, however, if her brief stage experience as a child was of the least service to her. Miss Marlowe herself is inclined to believe that it was not. The acting of a child is wholly different from that of an adult. Most children can be taught to act fairly well; some of them, indeed, to act delightfully, their unconsciousness enabling them to reproduce nature with ease and simplicity. The effect that children create so artlessly, however, is in the case of most adult performers the result of thought and of developed instinct. It is nevertheless true that the art of the greatest actors, the actors by temperament, most resembles the artlessness of children. On the stage they throw off their identities, and become the character they impersonate. Usually, however, the actor's talent, even when it is a fine talent, is hampered by consciousness, and, sometimes, paradoxical as it may seem, by intelligence. The actor who

relies on his capacity for developing a part intellectually is in for more danger of blundering than the temperamental actor, who follows his instinct. This explains how many a born actor can play with brilliancy rôles that he only partly understands. It may safely be assumed that Miss Marlowe's performances of the part of Maria in "Twelfth Night," which she had learned by rote and interpreted with a child's faculty for imitation and with genuine spirit, did not in the least help her when she came to study Viola. She had to learn to achieve effects that she had once been able to achieve without effort.

Time has justified the wisdom of Miss Marlowe in refusing to take any of the subordinate places in stock companies and travelling organizations that were offered her. If she had accepted one of them, her whole career might have been changed. In the first place, she would have been hampered in her determination to become a Shaksperian actress. There are so few companies presenting Shakspere that a

player has almost no chance to play Shaksperian parts. Moreover, as a subordinate actress, Miss Marlowe would have had few opportunities to develop. Most of our American actors play one part a season, frequently one part for several seasons. Consequently, they fall into mechanical habits, and they lose the training that they need. At the time Miss Marlowe was making her début there were not more than a half-dozen stock companies of repute in the whole country, and even these produced on an average hardly more than three or four a year. Now the situation is different: within the past three years stock companies have been established in most of the larger American cities; and, by changing the bill every week, they are giving their actors a valuable experience.

As a subordinate member of a company, Miss Marlowe would have suffered from the suppression that cramps the individuality of many a good player. She would have become a minor figure in the stage picture. Only actors and students of the every-day

Rosalind in " As You Like It "

Beatrice in " Much Ado about Nothing "

workings of the stage can realize what this signifies. To an actor of originality it often means artistic degradation. It means, also, that, when he has conceived a character in his own way, his ideas may clash with those of the star. Of course he will have to give way and follow instructions, even if the instructions make his portrayal imitative and feeble. In the reading of the speeches, he may be obliged to submerge his own intelligence to an inferior interpretation. By this interference many a good player has suffered discouragement, occasionally even despair. It often happens that actors are censured in print for playing parts not in their own way but in the way they have been ordered to play them. All such tyranny Miss Marlowe avoided by heading a company of her own. She could hold the centre of the stage, she could follow the dictates of her own thought and instinct, she could be judged on her own merits and faults. If she failed, she could then fall back into the ranks. She had everything to gain and nothing to lose. The start once made, she went valiantly on.

III.

AFTER the trial matinée, Miss Marlowe retired to the country where she continued her studies. Mr. Henry E. Abbey had been persuaded by the success of her début to let her have the Star Theatre in New York for one week during the season to come. So on the 18th of the following December she made her first regular appearance in New York, playing Juliet to the Romeo of that impassioned and versatile actor, Mr. Joseph Haworth. The New York papers praised her, and she seemed to have made an auspicious start.

Miss Marlowe showed the boldness of the novice in undertaking, at so early a period in her career, so difficult a Shaksperian rôle as Juliet. The explanation of the attraction of this character for most actresses is probably to be found in the variety of opportunity that it gives them. In the whole range of Shaksperian drama there is not so varied a part. Moreover, it is theatrically a great piece of climatic development. In

her first scene Juliet appears as a demure school-girl. Then she becomes the eager, impassioned woman, poetic and intense in the balcony scene, playful in the scene with the nurse, rising to sustained power in the parting with Romeo, in the potion scene, and in the situations at the tomb. Most young actresses, on playing the part, make a wild rush at Juliet, presenting her a declamatory and shrill egoist. Miss Marlowe, however, gave the impression that she approached the character with timidity, as if she could not wholly comprehend it, as if she was, in fact, bewildered by it. In her balcony scene she was tender and girlish, but she never even suggested passion. The scene of her first meeting with Romeo, however, and her wheedling of the nurse were exquisitely played. If she did not rise to the tragic intensity of the stronger situations, she never offended by attempting what she could not achieve. Even in those scenes where she frankly failed, she maintained a very beautiful dignity, and she held her audience by her sincerity and by the

charm with which she invested the character.

Miss Marlowe has since played the part nearly every season. It is now become one of her finest impersonations. Without losing in poetic quality, it has gained in passion and in vigor. The actress has not as yet acquired sufficient power to bring out the full horror of the potion scene; but her treatment of this difficult episode is a model of discretion. In spite of its inadequacies, her Juliet is unquestionably the best Juliet that our stage has had in the past ten years.

Later in the week Miss Marlowe appeared as Viola in "Twelfth Night," as Parthenia in "Ingomar." The beauty of her Viola won instant recognition, and the best friends of the actress realized that in this part she ought to have made her first appeal to the public. In the whole Shaksperian drama there is not a character that more strongly demands temperamental and feminine quality and fineness of fibre. That Miss Marlowe should at the start have made a success in this part was as good a

proof as she could give of her exceptional endowment.

The few weeks following the engagement at the Star Theatre must have been a trying time for the young actress. Her prospects looked doubtful, just as Mary Anderson's had done before the first notable successes were achieved. There were plenty of places on the stage open to Miss Marlowe; but she resolved to carry out her plan of leading a company that should present a classical repertory. In February she secured the chance of appearing in a series of performances in Cincinnati; and here, on the second night, she made her first appearance in the first leading part she had studied in New York,— Julia, in "The Hunchback." The character perfectly suited her, and she kept it in her repertory for several seasons. Of all her earlier impersonations it was, perhaps, the most remarkable, deliciously girlish and mirthful in the earlier scenes and deepening in feeling and in beauty as the character unfolds.

All these experiences, however, were

merely preliminary. It was not till the autumn of 1888 that Miss Marlowe began her real career. The company engaged to support her included such actors as Charles Barron, for many years leading man at the Boston Museum; William Owen, the best Shaksperian comedian in this country; Robert Taber, then winning his spurs as leading juvenile; and Miss Mary Shaw,—versatile and brilliant players, and notably successful in Shaksperian works. They opened in Washington, where Miss Marlowe was warmly greeted. The engagement, however, that may be said to have made certain her future as a "star" began a few weeks later in Boston. The Boston playgoers of that period must remember the impression she made on her audience. Reports of her ability had come from New York; and on the first night they attracted to the Hollis Street Theatre a large audience, which included the leading critics and every student of the drama. The play was "Ingomar," and Miss Marlowe's Parthenia was received with astonishment and delight.

Imogen in " Cymbeline "

Charles Hart in "Rogues and Vagabonds"

do. The discretion that serves her so admirably as Juliet, that keeps her from blundering, hampers her Rosalind. It has many good qualities: it is graceful, it is merry, it is saturated with nice feeling; but it is always discreet. It lacks the *abandon* of Miss Ada Rehan's Rosalind, the subtlety of Madame Modjeska's. Nevertheless, it surpasses both of these notable impersonations in its realization of the girlish qualities of the character. Those who are familiar with Miss Marlowe's Rosalind are likely never to forget the picture she makes, especially in the scenes in the forest, where she seems to embody the very atmosphere of the woods. It was in this part that the actress first used her adult singing voice, a delicate, pretty mezzo-soprano, just strong enough to fill the theatre. Miss Marlowe has kept "As You Like It" in her repertory during the whole of her career, and it has proved one of her greatest popular successes.

The emphatic success in Boston of Miss Marlowe was repeated in Philadelphia, in

Baltimore, and in Chicago, which have since become great strongholds of her popularity. In the smaller cities that she visited, too, she received warm commendation. She won favor not by skilful advertising or by personal exploitation, but through her work alone. A few years before a young débutante had been sensationally advertised in the press and exalted to a position which she could not maintain. The methods adopted in the management of Miss Marlowe were far more sensible and dignified. Her appearances were quietly announced in the newspapers, and such further publicity as she received came from the dramatic critics of the various cities and towns that she visited and from the friends that she made in her audiences. Interviewers were unable to reach her. Her work taxed her full strength, and she had neither the time nor the energy to discuss theories of acting. Besides, as her manager used to explain when the interviewers sought his intercession, Miss Marlowe had nothing to say in the press; all that she had to say to the

Constance in "The Love Chase"

Letitia in "The Belle's Stratagem"

public she said across the foot-lights. This reticence annoyed the reporter, but deepened the respect for so self-respecting, reserved, and simple a young actress. It helped to place Miss Marlowe in the honorable position that she now holds.

Great credit should be given to the devotion of Miss Dow to Miss Marlowe during this period. Though now a successful actress, Miss Marlowe remained a painstaking pupil. Miss Dow accompanied her to every performance, and watched her acting, offering encouragement and criticism.

IV.

IN her second season Miss Marlowe, accompanied by Mr. Eben Plympton, who succeeded Mr. Taber in the leading juvenile rôles, made a strong feature of her Rosalind and added to her repertory the comedy of "Pygmalion and Galatea." A few years before, Mary Anderson had made one of her greatest American successes as Galatea, and had chosen it for her début in England, capturing London on the first night. There are many of us who think that Galatea was the best impersonation Miss Anderson ever achieved, not excepting her wonderfully vital and poetic acting of Perdita in "The Winter's Tale." Indeed, Miss Anderson might have been created to play this part; and on seeing her in it, after seeing several of the most popular English actresses of his time undertake it, W. S. Gilbert must have felt as if he had unconsciously written it for her. As the statue, Miss Anderson's uncommonly tall and graceful figure created a perfect illusion. It was easy to understand how, in

London, one spectator made a wager that, in place of the actress, a marble figure stood on the pedestal. Throughout her impersonation her face never assumed flesh tints; and her acting as well as her looks made it impossible for you to forget that she was not of flesh, but had been hewn out of stone. She struck the note of absolute ingenuousness. Other actresses had made more "points" in the part; but no actress had given so consistent and satisfying impersonation. Mrs. Kendal, who played the rôle many years ago, used to make a point in the scene where Galatea first sees blood. Here Miss Anderson, like most actresses, would shudder, and ask, with terror, what the strange thing was. Mrs. Kendal, on the contrary, dipped her finger in the blood and made a line with it, looking at it with a curiosity and wonder that emphasized Galatea's ignorance of life. Like Miss Anderson's, the Galatea of Julia Marlowe was played on conventional lines. Though Miss Marlowe is not a large woman, she is able to create on the stage the illusion of

height; and, though her face and figure have not Miss Anderson's classic outlines, she made a very beautiful picture as she stood on the pedestal. In speech and bearing, too, she kept the character simple and poetic. After descending from the pedestal, Miss Marlowe allowed color to appear in her face,—a precedent since followed by Miss Julia Arthur. Those of us who admired Miss Anderson's Galatea are likely to favor her treatment of the character in this regard; but, of course, it is largely a matter of taste. Miss Marlowe might say, "But if Galatea opens her eyes, and shows eyes that are human, why shouldn't her face look human?" On the other hand, it might be asked, "If Galatea's complexion is to assume the tints of life, why should her hair remain the color of marble, as it always does?"

In the following autumn Miss Marlowe began her third year of work with very ambitious plans. Mr. Creston Clarke, nephew of Edwin Booth and a romantic actor of promise, became her leading man; and she announced productions of "Much

Ado about Nothing" and "Cymbeline." Early in the season she first played in the smaller places Beatrice and Imogen, preparatory to presenting them in the larger cities. A few weeks after starting out, however, while appearing in Philadelphia, she was stricken with typhoid fever. It was thought that Miss Marlowe would not be able to return to the stage till the following season, and the company was disbanded; but a long rest restored her strength, and she made her reappearance in Baltimore early in March.

This experience was the indirect means of placing Miss Marlowe on a footing of independence. Since the beginning of her career she had been bound by a severe contract with Miss Dow, which left her no liberty. From this contract she secured her release, and her business relations with Miss Dow came to an end. Then Miss Marlowe emerged from the strict seclusion in which she had been kept. She entered with zest, increased perhaps by her long reserve, into the social amusements that

were offered her. She is now one of the most personally popular of our actresses.

After her broken season, Miss Marlowe resumed work in the autumn of 1891 with practically the repertory in which she had appeared the year before, making stronger features of her Beatrice and Cymbeline, and presenting in conjunction with "Pygmalion and Galatea" a one-act piece written for her by Malcolm Bell, called "Rogues and Vagabonds." Mr. Robert Taber returned to her company as leading juvenile to play rôles in which he had already been seen with her, as well as Benedick and Cymbeline.

In "Rogues and Vagabonds" Miss Marlowe had a graceful success. The piece was a pretty comedy, well worth a place in a repertory. It told how Charles Hart, a famous actor of women's characters, and later of men's, of the seventeenth century, impersonated a woman, and taught a young lover how to woo and win the woman he himself loved. It was, of course, a scene from "As You Like It" in new shape, but

none the less clever and serviceable for this reason. It belonged to that class of plays written to enable actors to display their versatility. Sometimes these are good plays: often their only merit consists in the fulfilment of their immediate purpose. One of the best short comedies written by a modern dramatist is a piece of this kind, "Comedy and Tragedy," devised by Mr. W. S. Gilbert to exploit Miss Mary Anderson, and worthy of the abilities of a Bernhardt. There were moments in "Rogues and Vagabonds" when the part of Charles Hart went beyond the scope of Miss Marlowe; but in the expression of whimsical tenderness, and in her meeting of the lovers at the close, the actress achieved something like a triumph.

The character of Beatrice is not placed among the greatest successes of Miss Marlowe. That she made it charming need hardly be said. In fact, like most actresses who undertake the rôle, she tried to soften the sterner side of the woman and to emphasize the high spirits, the humor, and the

tenderness. The faults of the impersonation were summed up, when it was first seen in Boston, by Mr. H. A. Clapp, the well-known dramatic critic and Shaksperian student. "The more brilliant speeches," he wrote in the *Daily Advertiser*, "were forced to yield a humorous flavor, but did not make their true vivid appeal to the understanding and the imagination. Very often the touch was light and youthful, seldom was there any illuminating fancy. 'But there was a star danced, and under that I was born,' amounted to nothing more than a good-natured pleasantry. In short, the quality of intellectual force, the fire, definiteness, and originality of Beatrice's intellect were inadequately expressed or often quite eclipsed. The same criticism fits Miss Marlowe's effort on the emotional side. She was frequently sweet, bewitching, and piquant in her scenes with Benedick; but Beatrice's passionate depth of nature was scarcely indicated, the great representative verses beginning, 'What fire is this in mine ears? Can this be true?' from which Miss Marlowe

last night omitted the first six words, striking her key-note with a weak and superficial tone. In the opening scenes Miss Marlowe undoubtedly departed far from Shakspere's idea in representing Beatrice as frankly, consciously, almost gently, coquetting with Benedick, even to the extent of flirting a rosebud under his nose to attract his attention. But it is to be presumed that the innovations were deliberate and a part of the general lightness of the actress's scheme."

The fault that Mr. Clapp found with the Beatrice of Miss Marlowe, its lack of depth, touched upon her greatest weakness at this time. She apparently could not develop beyond the expression of a delicate and poetic tenderness; but to be able to realize this quality was in itself a rare gift, and it eminently served in the impersonation of Imogen, a part too much neglected among even the most ambitious of modern actresses. In recent years Miss Margaret Mather degraded it, but Madame Modjeska brought out all its poetry. Miss Marlowe could not bring to the part the sureness of method and

the variety with which the more experienced actresses had played it, but her Imogen must be set down as one of her most satisfying Shaksperian impersonations. A writer in the Boston *Transcript*, a paper conspicuous for the incisiveness of its dramatic criticisms, wrote on the occasion of Miss Marlowe's first appearance in Boston in "Cymbeline": "Miss Marlowe's Imogen may be set down without hesitation as her finest effort so far. Considering the wondrous completeness and many-sidedness of the character, and the consequent extreme difficulty of the part, this should be a matter of no little satisfaction to her friends and admirers, to those who build upon her past achievements hopes of even better things in the future. Upon the whole, Miss Marlowe's talent has shown from the beginning this in common with Henry Irving's,— that it is predominantly a talent for dramatic delineation. She has conspicuously the power, by no means common on the stage, of seeming for that time of being absolutely at one with the character she impersonates. Her specifically histrionic

Letitia in "The Belle's Stratagem"

As Chatterton

skill may at times fall short of showing the character in a very strong light, but the illusion she produces of really being the character she assumes to be is none the less complete and constant."

At the opening of the season of 1892–93, Miss Marlowe had an exceptionally large repertory. Thus far, however, her appearances had been confined chiefly to the Eastern and Middle States. Her manager decided to plan a tour for the season that should take her as far west as the Pacific coast. So the early winter found her in California, from which she travelled as far east as Boston. The only new part which she assumed this season was Constance in "The Love Chase," the old comedy by Sheridan Knowles, now seldom revived. It was well worth reviving, however; and it gave Miss Marlowe her first training in old comedy, a most valuable school of art, and it also offered her a part peculiarly suitable to her youth and to her simple methods. In this performance she had the co-operation of Mrs. John Drew, specially

engaged to play the "Widow Green." Miss Marlowe did not keep "The Love Chase" long in her repertory; though, in the following season, she revived it with Miss Rose Eytinge as "the Widow," and she has since occasionally repeated it.

V.

DURING the season of 1893–94 Miss Marlowe appeared in two new parts,—Letitia Hardy in "The Belle's Stratagem," rearranged for her by Mr. Edward Fales Coward, and as Chatterton in a new piece of that name written for her by Mr. Ernest Lacy, a young American. Mr. Taber, after two consecutive seasons as leading juvenile of the company, again retired and undertook other engagements; and the position was assumed by Mr. Henry Jewett.

Admirers of Ellen Terry who have seen the actress as Letitia Hardy will remember how Miss Terry infused life into Mrs. Cowley's eighteenth-century comedy. Miss Marlowe could not, of course, be expected to lend it the authority and the grace of the most brilliant comedy actress of her time. But she justified the revival by the charm, the delicacy, and the vivacity with which she played the chief character and by the quaint pictures she made in the dress of the period. She did not keep the piece in her repertory,

perhaps because she found that her audiences were not sufficiently responsive to the antiquated situations and jests.

More important was the production of "Chatterton." It took courage on the part of Miss Marlowe to present a poetic drama. As all students of the American theatre know, most actors and managers are afraid of blank verse. They think that audiences dislike it. This prejudice explains why, in the first place, our own poets so rarely undertake to write in dramatic form, and why those who do are forced to present their plays almost wholly through the medium of book publication. Mr. Lacy was fortunate in choosing a subject that made a strong appeal to Miss Marlowe. The mere mention of Chatterton's name arouses sympathy. Early in the century Alfred de Vigny had made him the subject of one of his dramas. Reference is made to this work by Émile Zola in "Naturalism in the Theatre." It is interesting, apart from its connection with the subject, as showing Zola in the rôle of dramatic critic and humorist. "My deepest

interest," he says, "indeed, my solely great interest, during the evening was the famous staircase. And I am convinced that the leading actor in the drama is this staircase. Mark how it succeeds. In the first act, when Chatterton appears at the top and slowly descends, his entrance is made much more effective than it would have been, had he simply come through a door on to the scene. In the second act, when the children of Kitty Bell are sent to carry some fruit to the poet, it is delightful to see the little legs of those adorable children hoist them up each stair: again it is the staircase. Finally, in the last act, the rôle of the staircase becomes altogether clear. It is at the foot of the stairs that the mutual confession of love made by Chatterton and Kitty Bell takes place, and it is over the banisters that they exchange a kiss. The agony of the poisoned Chatterton is rendered the more horrible to see as he climbs the stairs, dragging himself up. Finally, Kitty mounts slowly on her hands and knees, opens the door of the poet's chamber, sees him dead, falls backward, and

slides down the whole length of the banisters, to turn over and fall against the proscenium at the bottom. The staircase,—always the staircase. Suppose for an instant that the staircase were not there. Imagine a flat scene, and ask yourself what the effect would be. It would be diminished to nothing, and the play lose the little vitality that remains to it. Fancy that Kitty Bell opened a door at the back of the stage, and recoiled. That would be meagre. Why, then, is not this accessory, the staircase, raised to the rôle of principal character?"

A few years ago Mr. Wilson Barrett won considerable success in England and in this country in a short play by Henry Arthur Jones and H. Herman, founded on the story of Chatterton's career. Without being in any way remarkable, it contained some extremely effective situations, which Mr. Barrett played with his characteristically melodramatic vigor. Mr. Lacy's work, like the version used by Mr. Barrett, concerned itself with the tragic close of the young poet's life. The Barrett version had introduced what actors call a strong "heart-inter-

Lady Teazle in "The School for Scandal"

est" in the love of Chatterton for a young woman whom he believed to be indifferent to him. After taking poison in despair at his poverty and the hopelessness of his fate, he finds a letter which she has left for him at his lodgings, which makes life dear to him again. So the pathos of his death is intensified. Mr. Lacy used in his work only four characters: the poet himself, the landlady of the lodgings, and a London tradesman, for whom Chatterton, according to his habit, had provided a fictitious pedigree, and the tradesman's daughter. On discovering the cheat, the tradesman had called with the girl to remonstrate. But Chatterton succeeds in softening his wrath, and so works on the sympathies of the daughter that she leaves a purse for him. This charity he scorns, and ends his miseries with poison. As a drama, Mr. Lacy's piece suffered from inadequate construction. It seemed more like a biographical sketch in dramatic form, with very little tragical connection between the scenes. In the title part, however, Miss Marlowe had a genuine success, notably in depicting the mute pathos of the character.

VI.

EARLY in the spring of 1894 Miss Marlowe became the wife of Mr. Robert Taber. In every respect the marriage seemed to be ideal. Both were young, both were devoted to their work, both were ambitious. Most marriages between actors carry with them the promise of unhappiness; husband and wife, unless they belong to stock companies, are almost inevitably separated, sometimes for months at a time. Home life is impossible, save for comparatively brief periods each year. In the case of the Tabers, however, the conditions, it was thought, would be different. They would act together, as they had done before; and each would stimulate the ambition of the other. The stage had already given examples of happy marriages among successful co-stars, the most conspicuous being, perhaps, the case of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Kendal. It was known, of course, that many managers believed the public did not care to see husband and wife act to-

gether, but the Tabers hoped to be judged solely on their artistic merits.

Already Mr. Taber had achieved a high place on the American stage. He had the advantage of being well born and well educated. So he brought to the theatre intelligence and good manners,—qualities not so common among players that they may be taken for granted. His father was a cotton-merchant of New York; and two of his brothers had begun careers which have since given them honorable places in life, one as an artist and the other as professor of mathematics in Clark University. Mr. Taber was trained for the stage at the dramatic school of Mr. Franklin Sargent, which has introduced many good actors. His first professional work was done as a subordinate member of Madame Modjeska's company, in which he was so fortunate as to enjoy the advantages of playing small Shaksperian parts and of being associated with a great artist. Even then he was noticed for his fine physique, his rather handsome face, and for his intelligent readings and clear voice

and diction. His engagement as leading juvenile with Miss Marlowe gave him exceptional chances. He had a variety of parts, including Romeo, Claude Melnotte, Orlando, Orsino, Ingomar, and Clifford in "The Hunchback." His advance was, perhaps, a little too rapid for his abilities; but he did his work with a crude vigor,— that is, he overdid it. Unlike Miss Marlowe, whose development has been to reach a part slowly by underplaying it, Mr. Taber attacked his new rôles with violence. He suffered, too, from self-consciousness, which, besides being responsible for other defects, made it almost impossible for him to make a graceful exit. After leaving Miss Marlowe's company, he had a valuable experience in modern parts with the companies of Richard Mansfield and Rose Coghlan, as well as with a company organized to play the once popular melodrama "Roger La Honte," in which he had a popular success as the hero. When Mr. Taber returned to Miss Marlowe, he showed an unusual and a very praiseworthy ambition to broaden his

work by attempting character parts, usually given to older men. Instead of the romantic Orsino in "Twelfth Night," for example, he played Malvolio. He used to say that he preferred to appear in rôles in which he could sink his identity. The romantic actor nearly always thrusts forward his own personality, and the character actor usually strives to depict a personality wholly different from his own. Mr. Taber has proved the wisdom of his ambition by doing his best work in those parts where he has relied least on his personal appearance and most on the actor's power of impersonation. At the time of his marriage he was able to look back on about ten years of arduous and varied work, which offered justification for his ambition to take his place on equal terms with an actress who during the same period, had been establishing herself as one of the most successful on the American stage.

During the season after her marriage Miss Marlowe was billed as Julia Marlowe-Taber. Retaining several of the pieces with which she had become identified, she made

in addition two interesting productions: "The School for Scandal" and a condensed version of Browning's "Colombe's Birthday." As Lady Teazle, she was subjected to comparison with Miss Ada Rehan, who was then winning considerable success in the character, as well as with actresses of a past generation, who had been as members of the old stock companies trained in the traditions of old comedy. The performance lacked the brilliancy of Miss Rehan's, but it had a simplicity and a directness that Miss Rehan's work seldom displays. Miss Marlowe's production was, as might have been expected, Sheridan up to date. Perhaps it would be even truer to say, in the words applied by the great comedian, William Warren, so long a favorite at the Boston Museum, to Mr. Joseph Jefferson's production of "The Rivals," that it was "Sheridan twenty miles away." It appears impossible at this time to bring actors together who can give the flavor of old comedy. Miss Marlowe was able to present only a one-sided picture of Lady Teazle, making the character light and gay and

Prince Henry in "Henry IV"

Lydia Languish in "The Rivals"

essentially noble-minded. Much, of course, may be said in favor of this interpretation; but it leaves out a few important and interesting qualities. Lady Teazle cannot be ranked among Miss Marlowe's successes. The character was too subtle and too involved to be within the range of the actress at the time she undertook it.

By producing "Colombe's Birthday," Miss Marlowe showed courage, initiative, and fine poetic appreciation. A new version had been prepared for her by Rose Eytinge and S. Ada Fisher, who had skilfully stripped the poem of Browning's philosophical passages, and arranged in coherent form its dramatic situations. Miss Marlowe gave this piece only a comparatively few times, and not once in New York. She probably thought that New York would have little patience with Browning. Indeed, Browning as a writer for the stage has never received much appreciation. Lawrence Barrett, to be sure, had some success in his version of "A Blot in the Scutcheon"; but he did not keep the piece long in his repertory.

Here and there, too, in the history of our stage in the past fifty years, attempts have been made to give plays by Browning, chiefly, however, by cultivated amateurs. Mr. H. A. Clapp, in his notice of Miss Marlowe's production, recorded in the Boston *Daily Advertiser* that "the single previous public representation of the work in Boston took place at the Howard Athenæum on the 16th of February, 1854, when Mrs. Jean Davenport, afterward Mrs. Langdon, appeared as Colombe." The revival by Miss Marlowe aroused great interest in Boston and in a few other cities, attracting many lovers of dramatic literature who are rarely seen in the theatre. As Colombe, Miss Marlowe won a success of esteem. It can hardly be called more than that. "Mrs. Taber's impersonation of Colombe," said Mr. Clapp, in an exhaustive review, "was mixed of merit and demerit. It did not lack grace and ease. On the contrary, it was strikingly rich in these qualities, even in difficult situations. On the other hand, it was deficient in weight, force, and fire."

VII.

DURING the following season (1895–96) Miss Marlowe and Mr Taber carried out two ambitious plans that they had long had in mind. This was to make an elaborate production of the first part of Shakspere's play of "Henry IV," and a painstaking and accurate production of "She Stoops to Conquer."

Not long before, Sir Henry Irving had suggested to Madame Sarah Bernhardt that she produce the Shaksperian piece, playing herself the part of Prince Hal. It may have been this suggestion that gave the idea of the production to the Tabers. For many years the drama had not been given in America. So to the younger generation it would have the interest of novelty; to older play-goers it would recall memories of the late James K. Hackett, father of the present stage favorite of that name. The holidays of 1895 the Tabers passed at the summer home of Mr. Taber at Stowe, Vermont. Here they both worked hard preparing for the

new production. It would mark their first experience in their own stage management, and they were resolved that the task should be artistically and thoroughly accomplished. Mr. Taber engaged Mr. E. Hamilton Bell, the well-known artist and at one time an actor, to make plans for the scenery, following an example set by Sir Henry Irving and other stage managers of England, and very generally ignored here, of soliciting the co-operation of such men as Alma Tadema and Burne-Jones for their more elaborate productions. Mr. Taber was delighted with Mr. Bell's plans, and sent them to scene-painters in New York who were to carry them out. A few weeks later, on going to the city to see the work, he was appalled by the way the color schemes had been vulgarized. Then it was that he learned the lesson all actor managers must learn,— that their plans must be carried out under their personal direction. Mr. Taber gave new instructions to the painter, the work was begun again, and successfully completed.

Late in August the company assembled

in Milwaukee for rehearsals. Mr. and Mrs. Taber had prepared a stage version of the piece of their own, after studying those made by Mr. Hackett and by Mrs. Inchbold. When their arrangement had been finished, they discovered that it practically coincided with the usual acted version,—a fact which strengthened Mrs. Taber's faith in stage tradition. In spite of the hot weather the rehearsals were vigorously conducted for two weeks. Most of the stage business had to be devised, for in that regard the prompt-book offered little help. Not only had the actors to be drilled in their parts, but a large force of supers in armor had to be carefully trained for the battle scene,—a wearisome task in itself. Moreover, Mr. and Mrs. Taber had to learn to wear armor, in which they had never before appeared on the stage. To accustom themselves to it, they wore it in their apartments for several hours each day, even taking their meals in it. Even at the dress rehearsal many difficulties remained unsolved. For example, it was found that, if Sir John Falstaff were

allowed to appear in armor, he could not be lifted after he fell. Nevertheless, the production on the following evening was warmly commended by the local critics.

It was not surprising, however, that astonishment should have been expressed at the decision of the Tabers to produce "Henry IV." The explanation is probably to be found in the generosity of Miss Marlowe, who had at heart the interests of her husband rather than her own. There was really no part in the drama suitable for her. Lady Percy offered few opportunities, none, at any rate, worthy of a "star." Consequently, Miss Marlowe chose the character of the Prince of Wales. Those who are familiar with the work of Mr. Taber need not be told that Hotspur was eminently suited to his build and his declamatory style. It would seem that under the circumstances the honors must have fallen to Mr. Taber. But to the performance of Falstaff had been assigned one of the best Shaksperian actors, certainly the most comic actor of Shakspere in his time, Mr. William F. Owen.

As Romola

Mary in " For Bonnie Prince Charlie "

If for nothing else, the production would have been remarkable for Mr. Owen's unctuous characterization of the fat old knight. The humor of Falstaff has now almost wholly evaporated. Those who can laugh at his speeches deserve to be credited less for their appreciation of wit and fun than for their reverence for Shakspere. To give life and merriment to the character, an actor must have a very unusual fund of humor in himself. Mr. Owen succeeded where many another actor of ability would have completely failed. His impersonation was elaborately grotesque and faithfully Shaksperian. It must rank as the best work of its kind seen on our stage in many a year.

Of Miss Marlowe's "Prince Hal," it is not altogether pleasant to speak. Perhaps the kindest thing to be said about it is that it was a success of curiosity. The public was interested in seeing one of the most delicately feminine of modern actresses masquerading in the part of the young roysterer, trying to assume an air of bravado in uttering his coarse jests, and strutting across the

stage encased in mail. Miss Marlowe herself probably does not look back on those performances with much satisfaction. She soon began to dislike the part, and it is said that she used to cry every time she had to play it. She could not, of course, create the least illusion; and, though she read the speeches intelligently, her performance seemed like a bit out of comic opera. Mr. Taber's performance of Hotspur was, as might have been expected, vigorous and heroic, both in bearing and in speech. It was difficult for him, at the close of the drama, to accept his defeat by Prince Hal without subjecting himself and the Prince to ridicule; but our audiences are the politest audiences in the world. In this connection the mission of the work that Miss Marlowe has expressed in print is worth quoting: "Shakspere wrote the piece knowing that Prince Hal was a national favorite, and must be made heroic; and I suppose that this explains his victory over Hotspur at the end. No doubt Shakspere was politic, as we all are in some degree; and it seems to me

that he is rather at war with his conscience all the way through, wondering how he can make a sufficient hero out of the material he has to deal with." Then Miss Marlowe added, with perhaps a touch of humor that her interviewer missed, "Besides, I am very sure that, when Shakspere wrote 'King Henry IV,' he did not think of pleasing the taste of American audiences."

It was impossible, of course, for an actress of Miss Marlowe's temperament not to win favor as Lady Hardcastle in Goldsmith's comedy. It was equally impossible for this very modern young player, in spite of her training in Shakspere, to give vitality to the old comedy. She made Lady Hardcastle a charming young girl of the late nineteenth century, whose frolicking was the most graceful make-believe. Perhaps the best comment on the production was made by Mr. William Winter in the New York *Tribune*. Referring to both Mr. and Mrs. Taber, Mr. Winter remarked: "Neither of these actors — although both can be playful and both are apt enough at pleasantry —

displayed the peculiar talent that is essential for comedy. Goldsmith's dialogue, at its best, is rather formal, so that even when Lester Wallack and John Gilbert acted in this old play, their ingenuity was taxed to make its language seem fluent and flexible. Mr. Taber's crude delivery left it in its original condition of serried composure. Of all the old dramatists, Vanbrugh alone used language that it is deliciously easy to speak; but the old actors had a way of making all language sound as if it were flowing with spontaneous ease. The new actors seem not to have inherited that art. Mrs. Taber was, of course, agreeable as Miss Hardcastle. She could not easily be otherwise. The eighteenth-century rural English style, the distinctive quality which appertains to the characters exactly as a peculiar fragrance does to a special kind of rose, was not perceptible; neither were the buoyancy, the distinction, the sweep and dash, and the crisp and finely finished executive method, which are the indispensable characteristics of comedy acting. Mrs.

As the Countess Valeska

Taber seemed to make no effort of the imagination to assume a foreign identity, in a distant past time, and amid other environments than those of the present. Her manner is modern, and her vein is sentiment rather than humor. The personal sincerity and sweetness, and the kindly good humor of the embodiment, will be remembered as its best attributes."

VIII.

THE season of 1895–96 is further memorable in the history of Julia Marlowe as it marks her establishment as a New York favorite. After her first New York appearances during her earlier seasons, Miss Marlowe avoided the city for several years. It is true that she continued to play brief engagements at the Harlem Opera House; but, considered from the rather narrow point of view of the frequenter of the Broadway theatres, the Harlem Opera House does not really belong to New York. There are many actors, popular throughout the United States, who seldom or never venture to appear before Metropolitan audiences. One of the most artistic as well as one of the most successful of all our stars is a notable example, Mr. Sol Smith Russell. Occasionally Mr. Russell gathers courage to make a new attempt to win the favor of New York, but thus far he has received little encouragement. It may be that his art, which expresses itself in quiet, unemotional

plays, is too fine to be enjoyed by theatre-goers used to the highly spiced dramas coming from London and Paris and to the overwrought acting that these encourage. A similar explanation might have been offered in the case of Miss Marlowe. During her engagement at Wallack's Theatre, then Palmer's, she presented an extensive repertory, including "Romeo and Juliet," "She Stoops to Conquer," "Henry IV," and "As You Like It." The papers gave her considerable attention, some praise, and more or less severe criticism. The audiences did not fill the play-house, to be sure; but they went away pleased. Shrewd observers of the theatre saw that Miss Marlowe had at last made a place for herself in New York. On the opposite side of the street, Mrs. James Brown Potter was demonstrating how Juliet ought not to be played; and those who saw both Juliets cannot have failed to admire Miss Marlowe's all the more. It was during this engagement that Miss Marlowe's Juliet received from Mr. W. D. Howells in *Harper's Weekly* this tribute,

taken in part from a long article, which shows how remarkably she had developed in this character from her first timid and inadequate portrayal.: —

"I think that what Mrs. Taber did most beautifully was to give the sense of Juliet's youth, and let her nature open from childhood to womanhood like an expanding flower before the eye. It is a child who gives her love away upon the balcony: it is a woman who doubts of the potion which is to save her to her love from the marriage she dreads; and every moment of the change, the growth, has been most delicately suggested, most distinctly noted, in Mrs. Taber's performance. I could not see where at any time she failed, where her art fell short of her ideal; and, as her ideal was so beautiful, I do not know that I could say more than this in her praise. She had imagined Juliet with a purity in which there was no capability of consciousness, of the low selfishness which makes the inferior artist wish to shine at the expense of the poet's creation. She was throughout natural, and to be natural in the

ideal is all that art can do or criticism demand. Mrs. Taber has divined this with an intelligence from which alone such art as hers could spring. The impulse, the tenderness, the trust, the doubt, the fear, the courage that make up Shakspere's Juliet are all delicately expressed in Mrs. Taber's Juliet, and above everything the angelic gentleness, which, even more than her passion, is characteristic of Juliet, is accented with most sympathetic perfection. Her adorable sincerity, a thousand times more charming than any coquetry, for which it has not an instant's patience, seems to have imparted itself to the actress, so that she cannot play false to Juliet or be false to herself as an artist."

At the close of their regular tour, in the spring of 1896, Mr. and Mrs. Taber played a supplementary season in the production of "The Rivals," given by Mr. Joseph Jefferson with a "star cast." This cast is, indeed, so remarkable that it has an interest here: —

Sir Anthony Absolute	WILLIAM H. CRANE.
Captain Absolute	ROBERT TABER.
Falkland	JOSEPH HOLLAND.
Bob Acres	JOSEPH JEFFERSON.
Sir Lucius O'Trigger	N. C. GOODWIN.
Fag	E. M. HOLLAND.
David	FRANCIS WILSON.
Mrs. Malaprop	Mrs. JOHN DREW.
Lydia Languish	Mrs. JULIA MARLOWE-TABER.
Lucy	Miss FANNY RICE.

A performance of this kind is perhaps not to be considered very seriously. It was undertaken less with an eye to the interests of art than to financial profit. From the commercial point of view it proved to be eminently successful. The company played brief engagements in several cities before crowded houses at considerably advanced prices. Artistically, the greatest successes were won, first of course, by Mr. Jefferson and Mrs. Drew, whose acting in the old comedy was, however, familiar to the public, and by Mr. Wilson, who, in spite of an impossible accent, gave an uncommonly fine characterization, developed with great originality and with genuine humor. Mr. Taber,

Colinette, Act I

Colinette, Act III

too, received enthusiastic praise for his denotement of young Absolute's demure comic hypocrisy. The charm of Lydia Languish was everywhere recognized, but it was subjected to criticism for its failure to interpret accurately the dramatist's intention.

During the following summer Miss Marlowe and Mr. Taber devoted most of their working hours to preparations for the production of a stage version of George Eliot's "Romola," made by Mr. Elwyn A. Barron. For many years Mr. Barron had been distinguished as the leading dramatic critic of the daily press of Chicago, his writing having won distinction for its scholarly accuracy, its insight and fluency. At this time Mr. Barron was little known as a writer of plays. It would seem, however, as if his experience had given him an excellent preparation for the work. Still, as every one knows, it is much easier to point out the defect of a play than to write a good play one's self. The critical faculty is far removed from the ability to create, and the true qualities are not often found highly developed in the same writer.

The case is somewhat different when the critic's task is to take the material of another imagination and to use it in another medium.

"Romola" contains so many strong dramatic situations that, before Mr. Barron, others had been tempted to the task of transferring it to the stage. Mr. Barron's version had literary quality, it was picturesque, it told the story coherently; but as a drama it failed. It gave Miss Marlowe very few chances to display her abilities; but in the part of Tito, a far stronger part, Mr. Taber had a great success. The piece was presented for a few months only on the road. New York never saw it.

In spite of its failure to gain popular approval, Mr. Barron's play won a good deal of approval from intelligent critics. In the outlines of its construction it showed considerable ingenuity. Like many plays written by students of the theatre, it was better in plan than in execution. Mr. Barron opened the piece in a public square in Florence, and in the first act succeeded in beginning the story of Tito's cajoling of Tessa, and in

dramatizing Tito's sale of the jewels, his meeting with Romola, who passed, bearing a bunch of lilies in her hand and leading her blind father, and, finally, his reception of the news that Baldassare still lived. The weakness of the act was due largely to the crowding in of the incidents. The second act, which passed in the house of Romola, where her father was very successfully characterized, proved less interesting from the lack of variety of incident, though the love and the betrothal of Romola and Tito were very delicately handled. The third act was divided into two scenes, the first in Tessa's cottage, showing the meeting between Tessa and Baldassare, and the second in Romola's garden, where Tito's perfidy in selling the antiquities of the old scholar was betrayed. In the fourth act Tito had his dramatic scene with Cosimo de' Medici, and was pursued by the mob, to escape from which he leaped into the Arno, only to fall into the clutches of Baldassare, lying in wait for him. In spite of his principles, Mr. Barron had not been able to resist the temptation to

introduce a bit of melodrama here, the curtain rising to reveal Tito slowly strangling to death in the grip of his enemy. This scene naturally closed the drama; but, to wind up his story, Mr. Barron had to resort to the expedient of an epilogue, which presented Romola in the gray garb of a nun, adopting the child of Tessa and Tito, and receiving consolation from Savonarola.

The production of "Romola" was warmly recommended for its fidelity to historical detail and for its beauty. The scene in the garden in the second act had the quality of an old Florentine picture. But neither scenery nor good acting can save a play.

Greater success attended the next production of Miss Marlowe and Mr. Taber made later in the season. This was a version of François Coppée's powerful drama, "Les Jacobites," prepared by Mr. J. I. C. Clarke, under the title of "Bonnie Prince Charlie." The piece ran for several months when first given at the Odéon in Paris. There it had a remarkable cast, including Madame Weber, now known as Madame Ségond-Weber, and

remembered in this country for her splendid impersonations in the support of Mounet-Sully during the tragedian's brief tour here; Paul Mounet, one of the strongest of the actors who had joined the Français in many years; and that robust and eminently satisfactory player, Albert Lambert, father, by the way, of the younger Lambert, of the Français, one of the most brilliant interpreters of romantic parts now living. By her acting in this piece, Madame Weber practically established herself in Paris,—a fact which speaks well for the possibilities in the chief woman's character. Indeed, the character of the gentle Scotch girl, Mary, who devoted herself to the cause of the light-minded prince, perfectly fitted Miss Marlowe; and in the part of Mary's old father, the very embodiment of Scotch loyalty and self-sacrifice, Mr. Taber succeeded in sinking his mannerisms, and played with most effective sincerity and power. The work was too serious to please the great public, though it attracted large audiences for several months; and it has dropped out of Miss Marlowe's repertory.

It is always a pity when so fine a piece of dramatic writing as "Bonnie Prince Charlie" fails to make a strong appeal to the popular heart, especially at this time when so many trivial productions find wide and long acceptance. But, as has already been noted in these pages, the poetic drama has never found much favor among us. Coppée's verse naturally suffered from its transference into another speech; and, in construction, it was by no means without a flaw. The great situation, in fact, the scene where the old patriarch, Angus, is led to believe that his daughter has been seduced by the Prince, and lashes himself into fury, is spoiled by the knowledge of the audience that the girl is innocent and that her father's agitation is due to a misunderstanding. The pictures of Scotch life, too, made from the point of view of a romantic Frenchman, hardly endured close examination. Nevertheless, the drama contained several deeply moving scenes, and was conceived and executed on a high plane.

Colinette, Act III

Colinette, Act III

IX.

AT the close of the season of 1896–97 Miss Marlowe made two important changes in her career. She placed herself under the management of Mr. Charles Frohman, the foremost theatrical manager in the country, and the head of the now famous Theatrical Syndicate, or Trust, formed not long before; and she ceased to travel as co-star with her husband. From the point of view of business, both changes promised to be advantageous. Under Mr. Frohman's direction, Miss Marlowe would have the benefit of the power of the syndicate, which controlled most of the leading theatres in the East and the Middle West. Her decision to star alone was the direct consequence of her association with the syndicate. The shrewd managers in control of this combination believed that she would be more successful alone than as co-star with her husband. Whatever personal suffering this change occasioned may not be recorded in this biography, but the separation will

serve to illustrate one of the most familiar and most distressing features of theatrical life.

At the close of their last season together Miss Marlowe passed the summer with her husband in the pretty little Normandy village of Giverny, the home of Monet, the impressionist painter, and a quiet resort for English and American artists. When the time came for her return to America, Mr. Taber went to England to begin a new career. Those who have watched his progress know how rapidly he became a favorite there, and how conspicuous a position he now holds on the English stage. His successes have included his Macduff, in support of Mr. Forbes Robertson's Macbeth and the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and his performance in the company of Sir Henry Irving of the leading juvenile part in "Peter the Great."

During the first season with the syndicate Miss Marlowe played in her old repertory and in a new piece adapted from the German of Rudolph Straltz, called in the original

"The Tall Prussian" and in translation "The Countess Valeska." It proved to be a strong romantic drama, with a part eminently suited to Miss Marlowe's youth and abilities. In it she gave evidence of more technical skill than she previously had been able to attain. She even displayed a certain authority of manner. After seeing the work in the English version, one could understand the reason for its vogue in Berlin during the previous year. It was one of the few absolutely serious plays produced in New York during the season. Of humor it had none, though a certain relief was afforded by the subordinate episodes in which the two young lovers figured. The scene was laid in Poland in 1807. The Countess Valeska loved a young Prussian officer, whom she concealed in her house at the very time when she was offering hospitality to Napoleon, her country's "saviour." By chance she discovered that her husband was plotting against the emperor, and patriotism forced her to betray him. The piece was saturated with emotion and resounded with the clash

of arms; but the sentiment always rang true, and the dramatic episodes were developed without the sacrifice of probability. It was received with warm appreciation on the road, and for several weeks in New York it attracted large audiences to the Knickerbocker Theatre. Though Miss Marlowe had by this time become well established in the esteem of New York playgoers, this engagement made her a great favorite. In fact, it placed her among the most successful of American players. Those who had previously felt doubts regarding her future, now saw that her position was assured.

"The Countess Valeska" served Miss Marlowe for two seasons, presented during its second year with "As You Like It" and with a new piece from the French called "Colinette." It is not unlikely that she will revive it occasionally in seasons to come. In "Colinette" she has repeated the success won in "The Countess Valeska," though these two pieces are not for one moment to be ranked together in merit. Whatever "Colinette" may have been in the original,

in the version prepared by Mr. Henry Guy Carleton and revised by Miss Marlowe herself, it is one of the most insipid and fatuous comedies presented in this country in several seasons. It offered Miss Marlowe, however, a graceful and charming character, in which many of her admirers were glad to see her. To those, however, who had followed her work from the start and who appreciated her ambition to become known as an interpreter of Shakspere, it seemed a pity that she should waste her talent on such material. Financially, the season in which she played "Colinette" was the most prosperous she had ever known: artistically, it was almost barren. Not once during the year did she appear as Juliet, though this was the part that she wished most to play. It is worth noting that, during the closing months of this season, Miss Maude Adams, also managed by Mr. Charles Frohman, made her triumphal tour with her production of "Romeo and Juliet."

Early in the autumn of 1899 Miss Marlowe began her season with a revival of

"Colinette" and with preparations for the production of a new drama written for her by Mr. Clyde Fitch. This work she presented early in October in Philadelphia and a few weeks later in New York under the title of "Barbara Frietchie, the Frederick Girl." As the name suggests, the piece had been suggested by Whittier's famous poem. Mr. Fitch took liberties with the story, as he had a perfect right to do. He made Barbara Frietchie a young woman, and the central figure in a series of romantic and wholly imaginary incidents which led to the climax exploited in the poem, where Barbara waves the Union flag in defiance of the rebel soldiers passing her house. Perhaps the best that can be said of the piece is that it provided Miss Marlowe with a character which she played better than she had ever played a modern part before. As the young Southern girl, won over to the cause of the North by her love for a Northern soldier, she was delightfully vivacious in the early scenes; and, as the character deepened in feeling and intensity, she showed a remark-

Colinette, Act IV

As Barbara Frietchie

able command of her abilities, acting with exceptional sureness and powers.

Unfortunately, the piece did not sustain the chief part, which, by the way, kept the actress on the stage nearly all the time. The first act had decided originality, and was a natural and graceful bit of writing, infused with simple and wholesome romance. The scene disclosed a street in Frederick, with groups of prettily dressed Southern girls sitting on the doorsteps. The betrothal, on the steps, of Barbara and her soldier-lover was the prettiest love-scene yet written by Mr. Fitch; and it was very beautifully played by Miss Marlowe and Mr. J. H. Gilmore. The second act, too, at the house of the clergyman who was to unite the lovers, contained a good deal of clever work. But after the sudden separation of the lovers by the outbreak of fighting, before they had time to marry, the piece became unreal and melodramatic. Even Miss Marlowe's natural treatment of scenes in the third act could not keep them from approximating the ridiculous. The death of Bar-

bara's lover, however, in the first scene of the final act, was very well handled; but the flaunting of the flag by the grief-stricken Barbara proved to be wholly unsuited to stage purposes, giving the impression not of a noble patriotism, but of girlish hysteria.

Miss Marlowe is now so strongly established that there can be no doubt about the success of her future career. It is not likely that she will ever acquire great force: this is denied her by her physique and by her temperament; but she has other qualities just as valuable, which have already been emphasized in this brief narrative. Best of all, she has taste and insight, both of which are sure to keep her steadily developing on artistic lines. Thus far she has not been seen out of her own country. For several seasons she has been planning to make her début in England. Years ago Madame Sarah Bernhardt, who has been one of her warmest admirers, urged her to play in London. When, finally, she does appear there, she will show her talent broadened by a valuable experience in many kinds of acting; and it

is safe to predict that her quality will be appreciated. Meanwhile she is still a young woman, and with her gifts and her ambitions a great deal of fine work may be expected from her.

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